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THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ISSUE

OF AN

INTERNATIONAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGE

PARIS

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INTERNATIONAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGE[1]

The idea of an artificial auxiliary language, which could act as a communication tool for people of different nationalities, goes back at least as far as Descartes. Its emergence is perhaps not unrelated to the abandonment of Latin, which had to a certain extent fulfilled this role in the Middle Ages. However, it first came about in Descartes' time in a manner consistent with the general spirit of his work on the idea of a philosophical language; in other words, a writing system equivalent to what later became chemical nomenclature, where the sign for each element also represents the analysis of its composition. As in a "philosophical language", the structure of each word would contain the components of its definition. Moreover, prefixes, suffixes and inflexions added in accordance with fixed rules would allow one to uniformly and unequivocally convey number, tense, the relationship

1. The many attempts made in France and abroad, since Descartes and Leibniz, to create contemporary artificial languages has been studied extensively by Couturat, a former philosophy professor at the University of Caen, and Léopold Leau, a mathematics professor at the University of Nancy, in *l'Histoire de la langue universelle* (The History of the Universal Language) (1 vol. in-8, 608 pages, Hachette, 1908) and *Les nouvelles langues internationales* (New International Languages), the follow-up to the previous work (1 vol. in-8, 112 pages, Hachette, 1918).

between terms; in short, the complete logical structure of grammar. A language formed in this way would be consistent with the laws of human understanding. It would express the very structure of Cartesian common sense, “the most widely shared thing in the world”, and thereby act as a communication tool for all those who illuminate “natural light”.[1]

In a letter to P. Mersenne, Descartes referred to an advertisement, whose author was unknown, which contained six proposals relating to a universal language, intelligible at first sight with a simple dictionary. Taking up the idea, as was his custom, he drew up a plan for an artificial system that would satisfy these conditions. But he also went further; scorning such a utilitarian language, good for "common minds", he precisely articulated all the philosophical languages that had been created to date, as well as building a regular and logical grammatical system that could be applied to all words.

This idea in turn excited Leibniz, who worked on it informally all his life.[2] It was he who said: “*Si una lingua esset in mundo, accederet in effectu generi humano tertia pars vitae, quippe quæ linguis impenditur*.” The author of *Caractéristique universelle* (Universal Characteristics), more than anyone, flirted with the dream of a language whose words were all built on “the alphabet of human thought”. This dream, at least the first part of it, proved unworkable. We cannot *a priori* form roots whose structure expresses their content: neither the nature of things, nor

1. *Histoire de la langue universelle*, p. U-12 and 14.

2 Ibid , p. 23. This was a study by Leibniz that drew the attention of his editor, historian Louis Couturat, to the issue of a universal language. We know that for the last twelve years of his life, he dedicated himself to this project with increasing passion. Tragically, his work was cut short at its height by the outbreak of war.

the workings of the mind, even the most intellectual, lend themselves to such simplification. Leibniz himself, for all his eclecticism and opportunism, realised that. "However", he said, "although this language depends on true philosophy, it does not depend on its perfection. In other words, this language can be created even if the philosophy is not perfect; and as the science of man grows, this language will also grow."[1]

So the second part of the project, using perfectly simple and regular morphology and syntax, came to the fore. It could be applied immediately to all roots; for example, as Leibniz provisionally proposed, to a group of Latin roots. It proved surprisingly precise, flexible and rich. Artificial, *a posteriori* languages, free of the encyclopaedic ambitions of the 17th and 18th centuries, have expanded rapidly in recent times but perhaps not without risk, outside the direction and control of philosophers, philologists and scholarly bodies. On the other hand, this success has shed light on a truly remarkable characteristic: the unity of the movement of thought in which various languages were planned or created and the spontaneous convergence that tends to give them increasingly similar letters, thus setting out in advance a common result, so to speak. In light of this situation, it seemed to me that it would be useful to momentarily draw the attention of the Academy.

1. Unedited tracts and fragments, Couturat edition, p. 27-28.

This problem besides is not new for it. At the end of 1898, Mr Ernest Naville, Swiss correspondent at the Academy of Moral and Political Science, submitted a report on *The international language*. Read by Mr Georges Picot, the then permanent Secretary (at sittings on 28th January and 4th February 1899), the report contained an addition to Esperanto, which was gaining recognition and which the revered scholar had just studied.

"Let us suppose", he said, "that Esperanto, taught in mainstream secondary schools and universities, were free of the problems of modern languages and could bring back Latin, so precious and so seriously compromised."

He did not, however, conclude that this language should immediately be included on all programmes, but only that: "If these efforts (by Esperantists) live up to their hopes, when the language of their choice had become more widespread, we could easily convince the authorities to implement measures to make it universal, by making it compulsory in state schools. We must all work towards that aim."

One year later, on the initiative of Mr Léopold Leau, mathematics professor and Doctor of Science, with the help of Mr Louis Couturat, philosophy professor and Doctor of Letters, the Delegation for the Adoption of an International Auxiliary Language was founded in Paris on 17th January, 1901. The first delegates had been appointed by international conventions and scholarly societies at the Universal Exhibition in 1900. To mention just a couple of academy members, Mr Bergson represented the Society of Philosophy and Mr Lalande the Congress on the History of Science. If it is true that the Esperantists helped the Delegation to expand, it is equally true that, with seven years of propaganda about the idea, the Delegation also made a significant contribution to the success of

Esperanto itself, without compromising the neutrality imposed by the programme to choose an artificial language. By 1907, there were delegates from 310 associations in several countries: scientists, philosophers, engineers, shopkeepers, mediators, sportsmen, pacifists, tourists, labourers, etc. The propaganda was effectively backed up by a petition sent to the International Association of Academies, which was signed by 1,250 Academy members and university professors in various countries.
On 25th June, 1907, the delegates elected the Committee to work on the Delegation's programme to examine the various projects or systems for an international language and to choose the best one. There were three representatives for each of German and French, two for English and one for each of Danish, Spanish, Greek and Hungarian. They had a wide body of knowledge, notably including four eminent philologists: Mrs Beaudoin de Courtenay, Jespersen, Lambros and Suchard.

There were also three renowned Esperantists on the Committee, including the president of the "Lingva Komitato Esperantista". Eighteen sittings were held in Paris in October 1907, and their work was based on the highly detailed report of the secretaries, Mrs Couturat and Leau, which covered firstly the wishes of members of the Delegation regarding the choice of an international language and secondly the various proposals, reports and criticisms they had received over the seven years. Its conclusion was that Esperanto should be chosen, but only if certain modifications were made. Below is its final decision, taken unanimously, including by the Esperantists: "The Committee has decided in principle to adopt Esperanto because of its relative perfection and its numerous and varied applications, which have already been demonstrated. This is on the condition that certain

modifications are made by the permanent Commission within the meaning of the conclusions of the secretaries' report and Ido's project in seeking agreement with the Esperantist linguistic Committee".

Unfortunately, the latter is yet to reply to two letters politely seeking its cooperation. For his part, warning that he opposed any reform, Dr Zamenhof abruptly broke off all relations with the Delegation in January 1908, publicly vowing to ignore it, even though he had corresponded with its secretaries until the Committee meeting. From then on, the Delegation had no choice but to continue to fulfil its programme alone. It did so, and if Ido does not clearly bear the name of Esperanto with a distinctive epithet, responsibility lies with Dr Zamenhof, who categorically forbade it. The modifications made by the Delegation Committee or the permanent Commission were then completed from 1908 to 1914 in a joint, international and public effort published in the journal *Progreso* directed by Mr Couturat. Ido, in its current form, was born.

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The following comparisons give an idea of the particular letters used in each of the two forms of the language.

The Delegation first had to come to a decision on the use of accented letters in Esperanto. Since it did not accept the French letters « é , è, ê, ù », could it keep the letters « ĉ, ĝ, ĥ, ĵ, ŝ, ŭ » of

1. Ido was the collective pseudonym under which several members of the delegation, notably Mrs Beaufront and Couturat, had presented a project to simplify and improve Esperanto.

Esperanto ? — For an artificial language to be used universally, it must be able to be printed everywhere. And yet diacritical marks, currently used in Czech (at least for the most part), cannot be printed in the vast majority of civilised countries. That would have forced printing houses to obtain a selection of these strange characters, at great expense, or to allow certain houses to have the monopoly on texts written in this bizarre system. Such difficulties were clearly contrary to the goal we were trying to achieve: the propagation of an international language.

The experience proved that we could easily replace roots or affixes containing these accented consonants with simpler forms: replacing the "y" (which has the French "j" sound), for example, with a "j" and representing the German "j" sound with a "y", which Esperanto did not use. We could even write "*fisho*" (fish; French: "*poisson*"; German: *"Fisch*") instead of "*fiso*"; "*shuo*" ("shoe"; French: "*chaussure*"; German: "*Schuh*") instead of "*suo*"*;* and do the same for many words, which would make them look familiar to lots of readers.[1]

Turning now to grammar, it was possible to remove some useless complications.

First of all, the agreement of adjectives. English avoids this very well, and even French often has only one form for both masculine and feminine, or both singular and plural: "*l'homme honnête*"*,* "*la femme honnête*"*;* "*l'homme généreux*"*,* "*les hommes généreux*". And yet nobody makes mistakes.

1. Moreover, Dr Zamenhof, the creator of Esperanto, allowed in principle the replacement of accents on consonants with the letter "h". However, this method, which was indeed successful in the examples cited, also seriously distorted parts of the words in cases such as "*hhoro*" ("horo") = choir, or "sagha" ("saĝa") = wise.

Since Esperanto had already removed gender differences in adjectives, it was logical to also remove them in the case of plural: if there is already a plural marker in the noun, why repeat it in the corresponding adjective?

The second uselessness is the use of the accusative where it is not absolutely necessary. Languages derived from neo-Latin and some others place the direct object straight after the verb to which it relates, and make precede the other objects by the appropriate preposition. There is only one exception: when the direct object precedes the subject. In that case, a sign must be used to indicate the inversion: for example, when a relative or interrogative pronoun naturally precedes the verb. And because this inversion sign can be used with a neuter verb, it should be called inversive and not accusative. These cases aside, it is absolutely pointless to use the accusative, which causes serious difficulties for people who do not have it in their language or who do not speak any languages with declensions.

The same could be said of the process by which Esperanto forms plurals by adding a "j" to the flexional ending of the singular. Logic shows us that it is better and more rational to substitute than to add. That's what the Italians do: "*tempo*", "*tempi*". Even in French, where the plural is generally formed by adding an "s", it was not so long ago when we used to write "*parent*", *"parens*"; "*enfant*", *"enfans*". There is still a trace of this in the current spelling of the pronoun "*tous*" ("*tout*" in the singular). The Delegation therefore substituted the Esperanto word "*homoj*" with "*homi*", which is easier and also more euphonious.

The reform project adopted made infinitives look more natural.

Instead of the flexional ending “i” used in Esperanto, it used “ar” which is reminiscent of the infinitive form used in Latin, Italian and Spanish. Since the vowel “a” marked the present tense in the indicative mood, the vowel “i” the perfect and the vowel “o” the future, it was logical and practical to use these three vowels to distinguish the three tenses of the infinitive. French has to use the auxiliary verb “*avoir*” or “*être*” to form the past tense and, in the worst-case scenario, the verb “*devoir*” for the future, although the latter is neither a moral obligation, nor a financial commitment. Latin, with its “-are”, “-isse” and “fore” forms, supports the necessary vowel, which matches the present, past and future tenses of the indicative in Esperanto and Ido. Latin and Greek used these three forms without an auxiliary (at least apparent). This was a sign, and it is appropriate for the I. L. to adopt its strengths. The weakness of our languages on this point should not deprive the I. L. of a resource which satisfies logic and simplifies the language. “*Esar*”, “*esir*”, “*esor*” are certainly more precise than "to be", "to have been", "to have to be". In the same way, we can substitute “*mortar”, “mortar”, “mortor”* for "to die", "be dead", "have to die" . It is a very simple system that satisfies the mind and eases the memory.

But the real progress was the derivation method, the tool par excellence of an artificial language, which ensures wealth and precision. It requires the change from one term to another with the same root to be perfectly measured and reversible; in other words, it is possible to switch unambiguously from the second to the first. On this point, Esperanto had already made considerable progress compared to previous languages, such as Volapùk. But the principle had still to be applied rigorously and universally.

An international auxiliary language must, above all, avoid copying some national languages such as French by directly transforming into verbs nouns *(*“*meubler*”, “*rimer*”, “*plumer*”), adjectives (“*égaler*”, “*inquiéter*”, “*innocenter*”) or titles (“*philosopher*”, “*patroner*”), etc. Indeed, any roots turned into verbs in this way do not mark the relationship between the original and its derivative, nor even the idea of the action or state. In addition, the analysis of these words does not actually give them any meaning, contrary to the general principle on which derivation is based. Suffixes, such as -“iz” (to equip), -“if” (to produce), -“ig” (to return), -“ij” (to become), -“es” (to be), etc. are essential for conveying the idea in the word, as it is conveyed in the intention of the person using it.

Incidentally, this shows that the study of such a completed language is a good intellectual exercise for adolescents, forcing them to consider exact meaning of what they want to say and which relationship they conceive between ideas.

The formation of derived verbs having brought us to the suffixes referred to above,, let us penetrate in the mediate derivation, which is carried out by adding to the root a suffix similar to these. If it is for example the derivation by - al, - iv, - oz, - ur, don't our languages themselves indicate to us the need to use? They inherited –“alis”, -“ivus”, -“osus” and –“ura” from Latin. A rigorous auxiliary language cannot ignore them. Would the flexional ending “a”, which marks the adjective in Esperanto and Ido, be sufficient by itself to replace –“ala” (relating to), -“iva” (capable of, able to), -“oza” (equipped with), etc.? We supported that idea. But that would sacrifice the rigour of thought, and in some cases would even result in meaningless words.

We can say it very clearly in Ido: "*Quankam ta verko ne esas libro instruktala tamen ol esas instruktiva*" (although this essay is not an instruction manual, it is instructive nonetheless). In Esperanto, where the derivation system is more basic, the same sentence cannot be translated exactly. It would be an enigma to say: *"Kvankvan tiu verko ne estas libro instrua, tamen ĝi estas instrua"*.. Should it say "*instrua*" and "*instruanta*"? "*Instrua*" is vague, and "*instruanta*", the present participle, expresses a fact, not a possibility.[1] We must therefore guess the idea through a subtle mistranslation (as often happens in translations of living languages). We therefore lose one of the great qualities of a well-designed artificial language – precision - and consequently the refinement that an average mind can draw from its use.

The complete list of affixes in Ido is much richer than in Esperanto, but still limited enough to make it easy to remember, comprising in total fifteen prefixes and forty-six suffixes. Here, in addition to those we have already listed, are the main ones:

Prefixes: -"Ne"- (negation); -"des-" (opposite); -"mis" (inaccurate); -"sen-" (deprivation); -"ri-" (repetition); -"ex-", -"pre-", -"retro", the last three are self-explanatory.

Suffixes: -"ul" (masculine); -"in" (feminine); -"et" (diminutive); -"eg" (augmentative); -"ad" (frequency or continuation of an act); -"aj" (what is made of); -"ar" (joining, collection of); -"ur" (result of an action); -"an" (member of); -"id" (descendant of); -"ik" (affected by); -"er" (a person who practises, for example, an art or a sport); -"atr" (that which resembles something or other); -"ebl" (that

1. Ido also uses the adjectival ending –"a" by itself but only in specific cases, to say what something is (what designs the root): *"ruina kastelo",* a castle which is in ruins; "*insulta vorto",* a word which is an insult. *"Homa ento"* = human being, but "*homala parolo"* = human speech (not "*homa parolo*", as in Esperanto).

which could be); -“end” (that which should be); -“ind” (worthy of); -“esk” (to start to, for example, “*dormeskar*” = to fall asleep); -“ey” (designated area); -“i” (domain, jurisdiction: *“paroko*” = parish priest, “*parokio*” = parish); -“il” (tool for); -“eri” (establishment of, for example, “*distilerio”* = distillery), etc.

Numeric suffixes: -“esm” (ordinal number); -“im” (fraction); -“op” (e.g., “*triope”* = three times three), “*pokope”* = bit by bit); -“opl” (mulitplier, e.g., “*triopla*” = triple).

What’s remarkable is that these different affixes almost all match those of civilised Western languages. So this is a game for assimilating and using these particles which, when joining them to a known root, makes words look very natural. Thus, for example, French, English, Italian and German have a large number of adjectives ending in –“al” or –“el” which, as in Ido, mean "relating to”: “*national*”, “*cural*”, “*architectural*”, “*structural*”, “*individuel*” (“individual” in English and German), “*manuel*”, “*universel*”, etc. This method gives the language a finesse and precision that has been brought to light by several instances of double translation; in other words, when somebody other than the translator recreates the original text. Their success showed to what extent Ido could be used in a wide range of texts and preserve all the content.

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Turning to the issue of vocabulary, we can distinguish two kinds of words: those which are already international, often because of their technical or scientific origins, and common words. To the first group of words, it is sufficient to apply the rules of a writing system that does not destroy the appearance of the word in question.

Kindly examine the Radio-lexiko, which I have the honour of paying tribute to the Academy: it is clear that scientific words are instantly recognisable, and it would be easy to believe that this was a mere simplification of the standard spelling applied to German, English, French, Italian or Spanish words. The same applies to *Lexique de Mathématique* (Vocabulary of Mathematics) by Mr Couturat, *Lexique biologique (Vocabulary of Biology)* by Dr Bourbier, and *Lexique de l'art photographique* (Vocabulary of Photography) by Dr Pfaundler. For words that are already very international, it was therefore necessary to respect internationally recognised terms. The same is true for technical terms, philosophical terms, etc.

As for common words, the Delegation adopted a wise and practical rule which the Academy followed in its choice of words: this principle demands the maximum internationality between the German, English, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish languages. This is based not on the populations of the respective countries, but on the number of people who speak those languages. For example: there are 120 million speakers of English; 80 million of German; 60 million of French; and 40 million of each of Italian, Russian and Spanish. For a word to be adopted, it must already be familiar to at least 200 million people; not manufactured, but found in the common vocabulary of the six major languages. So what happens? If root is common to neo-Latin languages, it is very likely to be adopted, especially because it is usually found in English. Therefore, if a root meets these conditions, it will already be familiar (whether in its raw form or in its common derivatives) to the French, the Italians and the Spanish; in other words, 60 + 2x40 = 140 million people.

If we add English, that makes 120 + 140 = 260 million people who know the meaning of the given root. If, on the other hand, nothing satisfactory can be found in the neo-Latin languages, English and German can provide 120 + 80 million people who know the meaning of the chosen word. The minimum threshold (200 million) is therefore reached. Let us take the example of a common word, "*Kavalo",* whose root is "*kaval".* This root is familiar to the English, the Germans, the French, the Italians, the Russians and the Spanish. There are thus 120 + 80 + 60 + 40 + 40 + 40 = 380 million people who do not need to learn the meaning since it can be found in their own language, whether in a simple, compound or derivative form. On the other hand, the word in Esperanto, *"ĉevalo"* (pronounced "*tchévalo*") is only familiar to French speakers, of whom there are only 60 million; this word would have to be learnt by English, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian speakers, of whom there are 380 million.

The guide for which roots to adopt is therefore how international they are, with a rigorous definition to avoid any misunderstandings when the meaning is not obvious. It is this principle on which basic grammar and exercise books in all European languages were written, as well as considerable works such as the *Dictionnaire Français-Ido* (French-Ido Dictionary) by L. de Beaufront and L. Couturat, the *Dictionnaire Ido-allemand* (Ido-German Dictionary) by Feder, the Ido-Hungarian dictionary by the engineer Bakonyi, the Ido-Swedish dictionary by Ahlberg, the *Dictionnaires Anglais-ido et Ido-anglais* (English-Ido and Ido-EnglishDictionaries) by L.H. Dyer. Various collections of the chosen roots have been published in the form of glossaries by Feder and Schneeberger for German and yours truly for French. There have been more and more journals: there were eighteen before the war and some did not survive the problems of the time, but others, from various political and religious trends, remain.

The neutral, official journal, entitled *Progreso,* previously edited by Mr Couturat, was replaced by *Mondo*, which was published in Sweden during the war and has become the official voice of the Ido Academy. It includes all important information on the international language movement and suggestions for new words, which are open to public consultation for six months before being submitted to Ido Academy members for evaluation. The form and definition of the suggested root are critically re-examined. If the root is chosen, it is of course included in the official journal *Mondo*, which is currently published in Finland for financial reasons until a more practical solution can be found.

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Nobody needs reminding that the aim of the I. L. is not to replace national languages, but to supplement them. We cannot claim to learn the some 800 languages and 8000 dialects in the world; furthermore, is it a science, is it enriching, to be able to convey the same idea in five, ten or even twenty different languages? Even if it is enriching, does it not take up too much time, which would have been better spent studying more useful, truly intellectual things? Instead of spending several hours a week over several years learning foreign languages that one will never truly master without practising them constantly or living for a long period of time in the relevant countries? Moreover, is it really fair that this expensive method is the sole preserve of those who have the time and the money for extra lessons?

In truth, everybody is free to devote their life to the study of foreign languages and literature, but for the average person this is only snobbery and uselessness. It explains why Victor Hugo advised Rochefort to stop studying English, which he said would ruin the genius of his own language. So everybody should study their own language better — we must recognise that this is being sadly neglected nowadays — and be able to speak a second (auxiliary) language to use when they need to communicate with a foreigner. I have had the chance to put this method to the test, and I found it effective. I needed to find information about an insect which was not included in any French books. There was a paper on the topic in a Swedish journal. In publications of this type, the name of the insect is in Latin (a semi-barbarian Latin full of ablatives), as is customary, but the interesting details about the research on the animal and its lifestyle are provided only in national languages: we can see that from French journals of this type. It seems that every author wishes to force their readers, with a certain envy, to study their own language, despite the oft-cited principle that science is universal. Yet Swedish is rarely spoken even in Paris. The simplest thing to do was thus to turn to the country of origin. From the list of Swedish Ido speakers, I chose, because of the subject matter of the scientific paper, a name which seemed to be that of an educated man. Eight days later I received, to my great satisfaction, a translation in the international language which was exactly what I wanted.

Let us admit that one has nothing to do, temporarily, with this second language: the time taken to acquire it is truly negligible, and we can leave aside what we have learned until we need to use this means of intercomprehension. The small grammar book, which is only one page long, the small glossary of common vocabulary and the derivation system of which I have already

spoken are more useful than any foreign language, which one always hesitates to use unless one has studied extensively and at great expense. Undoubtedly, there will always be specialists dedicated to the study of English, Italian, German, Spanish and even Russian. But one can scarcely imagine a scholar who has mastered all five of those languages. And yet he may have to interact with colleagues from all of those nationalities, and even other peoples. An international language seems to be the only solution to this problem. There is, however, still one objection to which we must respond: after so many successive projects, what makes us think that another system will not prevail? After Volapük and Esperanto, will Ido not itself be replaced by an even more perfect tool? Let us expect this last to study it.

I dare say that this outcome is very unlikely, precisely because of the process used in Ido. Remember that the grammar is as simple as possible, the morphology is international and the system of affixes is based on existing living languages. As for the vocabulary, whatever a new inventor claims, it must always go back to the attempts at a "philosophical language" found wanting by experience or to take for rule the maximum of internationality of the roots that he will want to adopt and therefore, on this point still, he will never be able to do anything other than what has already been done.

There would be thus only a very small number of differences, even more insignificant than those that currently exist between Esperanto and Ido. Furthermore, the periods of stabilisation established by the Delegation pave the way for potential small modifications that shall bring to mind the practice in various scientific domains. We must remember that even the Académie française [a learned body that regulates the French language] acts in this way with the French language and spelling. In short, "all progress has a limit: when an objective is achieved as fully as possible. From there, it can over time change

imperceptibly (like our languages), it can come to a halt, it can die: but, in the true sense of the word, it no longer improves".

Because of its internationality, there is a limit that the roots of an I. L. cannot exceed; and simple common sense tells us that there is also a limit to grammatical simplicity: the clear and accurate expression of thought. Esperanto did not reach the first limit and did not always take account of the second, seemingly because of an overstated desire to have as few forms as possible (for example, only one plural personal pronoun, only one relative pronoun) and as few roots as possible: it has no root for "to dare" and it confuses "fearful" with "shy", "reason" with "caution" and "comfortable" with "opportune"; it has in addition several forms for words whose root should be the same: "*redakti",* but "*redakcio"* and "*redaktoro"*. There is no cure for these quirks because of the elusive book called *Fundamento*, which opposes any improvements in this regard.

Recently there have been systems designed to improve the international language: Occidental and Medial. The former especially shows what the replacement would be: an interim measure that exaggerates what I would call "naturalness"; certainly different to Esperanto, but no better; less logical and less euphonious than Ido; and based on etymological spelling, found wanting by all linguists for the international language. The latter, Medial, is a blunt mixture of Germanic and Latin languages, in an attempt not to favour one or the other: it is therefore driven by pure empiricism. If one criticises Ido for seeming to favour Latin, one must remember that this is not by choice, but the automatic effect of the objective principle of maximum internationality; Latin roots are found in various Romance languages and are also entering into a large number of Germanic languages thanks to Roman civilisation, which can be neither denied nor renounced.

Moreover, new scientific words are far more reminiscent of Greek or Latin than common words in modern languages. Mentioning a book such as that by the engineers Feder and Nordin should be enough to settle the issue. I know of only one other work of that genre, just as comprehensive in its radiographical definitions and formulae, that has not been published in any national language.

As we say in philosophy: *"ab actu ad passe valet consequentia"*. The proof that an international language, as foreseen by Descartes and Leibniz, is possible is its collective and spontaneous realisation, so to speak, its use in all scientific and technical domains and its satisfactory use in various conferences held in Vienna, Cassel and Luxembourg, where it has proven just as easy to speak as to write.

Abbé J. GUIGNOiN

Sitting of 18th July, 1925.

This statement gives rise to the following observations:

Mr Lyon-Caen listened with great interest to the statement that has just been made. But he admits to being very hostile to all attempts to create an international language, both for general reasons and reasons linked to the interests of France.

First of all, he has grave doubts about the possibility of disseminating worldwide an artificial language created in accordance with a predetermined plan and strict rules. No language has ever been created in that way in the past.

Moreover, efforts to disseminate Esperanto, Volapùk and all other similar languages, should they succeed, would have very unfortunate consequences for France. The French language is still widely used in diplomacy and international scientific conferences. It is true that our language has, in recent years, somewhat lost out in this regard. It is our duty to try to get a positive response, not to contribute to the replacement of the global role of our language with another.

Mr André Lalande - The interesting statement made by Mr Abbé Guignon and the permanent Secretary's fierce criticisms of the very use of an artificial international language raise two questions that seem to lend themselves to quite different observations.

First of all, I find it necessary to bring my own experience to bear to confirm what has just been said about the perfection reached over some twenty years by the international language. For it really is possible these days to speak of it in the singular, thanks to the remarkable convergence highlighted by Mrs Couturat and Leau, and to which M; Abbé Guignon has just brought our attention. — I began, like most learned men, I think, by judging the idea of an artificial language as somewhat puerile and ridiculous. But my late colleague and friend Couturat, who had himself been converted to the idea over the course of his historical research into Leibniz, showed me that it was just common prejudice, caused by ignorance. I saw him gradually abandon his studies of the logic and history of philosophy, for which he was already renowned in France and abroad, to devote all his time and energy to learning a means of thought and communication that he considered of

great scientific interest. I realised that it was no exaggeration to speak of the intellectual and educational value of an artificial language formed in such a simple way, as logical and complete as it is now, and even its value for the scientific expression of ideas. As unlikely as it seems, I can say that this remarkable method of analysis is one of the most useful not only in the critique of philosophical terminology, to which I devoted many years, but even in higher education, to clarify often subtle differences in meaning. Take, for example, the word "determination" as a philosophical term. Even leaving to one side the meaning that relates to the psychology of will, in which the word corresponds not to "determine", but to "self-determine". There are still three meanings to discern: 1° The act of determining: "the determination of a date, the determination of a relationship between two doctrines". 2° A determining characteristic, such as the famous slogan "all determination is negation". 3° The fact of being determined, which is in contradiction to indeterminacy. These meanings, thanks to the set of rigorous suffixes that are essential in the international language, will be unequivocally represented in Ido by "*determinado", "determinivo"* and *"determineso"* respectively. — Similarly, clearly distinguishing between "*verajo"* that is truth in the meaning of true proposal (not every bit of truth is fit to be told) and "*vereso"* that is truth as a characteristic of that which is true, avoids a range of verbal problems, particularly the notorious issue of pragmatism. There are hardly any abstract terms that do not suffer from similar ambiguities. A linguistic mechanism that is both very simple and very precise, such as Ido, shines a light on these ambiguities that is comparable to that shone by modern chemical nomenclature on the disparate and obscure wording of the 18th century.

Until now, I had not considered language as anything other than a tool of thought. But is designed above all for communication. The fact that an artificial language can develop, the very fact of is current dissemination, is proof of that. However, the main danger seems to be that it will spread spontaneously, a bit by chance, outside the control of learned bodies, and above all when it is still imperfect, which would not provide its full logical benefits.

The objection raised by Mr the permanent Secretary is certainly impressive, and worthy of consideration. However, it seems to me that it should not stop us, for two reasons. I do not believe that a well-constructed artificial language would be detrimental to French; and I will explain why shortly. But even if its adoption did reduce the

knowledge and the use of our own language in certain circle, in addition this would itself be such a benefit for the international intellectual cooperation and science, that we would miss with an unpleasant duty, but morally very clear, if we refused to accept its disadvantages.

I hasten to add, moreover, that in my opinion, our patriotism should not alarm us. Firstly, alas, because the status of French abroad is not what it once was. We can hardly hide the fact that if a living language were in the process of becoming a second language, it would be English, currently spoken not just in the British Isles, the United States, most of Canada, South Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand, but also as almost the only European language in the Far East. In drawing up the treaties that ended the war (except, I believe, the treaty of Lausanne), English dominated our language, sometimes shaping the corresponding French text. Moreover, all League of Nations records are, in law and in fact, written in two languages, English and French, both of which are valid. And the few occasions since then when only French has been used in international conventions regrettably stand out as incidental and limited. We are very grateful to foreigners who protested against this state of affairs in various ways, especially Mr James Brown Scott, who did us the honour of writing in French the praises of French as a diplomatic language. But the very need to plead in this way shows how far we are from our former position.

In truth the point I want to make is that, in the grip of the linguistic nationalism that prevails in Europe, there is perhaps no living language, not even English, which can successfully claim to fulfil the role of an international language.

As Mr Meillet demonstrated and as numerous events since his work was published have confirmed, all peoples currently want to speak and write in their own language, even on scientific topics. In Belgium, Flemish goes against the previous official linguistic unity; the Irish staunchly refuse to speak English; the Polish and the Czechs resist speaking German; the Zionist colony in Jerusalem publish a journal in Hebrew. This differentiation is understandable, and we can even respect the reasons for it, but it seems to rule out for the foreseeable future the globalisation of one of the major languages that could aspire to that role.

Far from harming French, in the current state of affairs, the dissemination of a good artificial language could actually help it. Suppose that all European peoples, by adopting Ido, were freed from the

hassle of hastily learning the practical notions of living languages. That would not mean they had to give up the admirable cultural tool that is the study of a foreign language. From them on, their choice would be determined by the wealth of literature that the study of that language would open up for them. Does French not have infinitely more advantages in this area than that of travel or business? I do not think it a patriotic delusion to count in this regard on the value, number and variety of our writers, in the Arts as well as the Sciences.

That's not all. A well-constructed artificial language is already, in itself, a very good tool in the analysis, understanding and acquisition of foreign languages. Moreover, a language such as the one just discussed by Mr Abbé Guignon, founded on the strict principle of maximum internationality, could prove, by accident, an excellent and easy introduction to the study of French, — indeed, some of our compatriots who are not familiar with the principle are often shocked by how easily they understand it, and think that others will reject it as being too similar to French. The resemblance is real, but the fear is fanciful: as we pointed out earlier, foreigners know these roots in advance from their own languages. English uses the word "Ethics*"* for "*Morale"*, but uses "Morality", "Moralise" and "Morally". German uses the word "*Gesetz"* for law, but everyone in Germany understands "*Legalität"; "Liberalismus"* is no less common than "*Freisinn",* or "*Prinzip"* than "*Grundsatz"*, etc. — It is therefore quite right, and with no bias, that the I. L. is formed mostly on Latin roots, easily recognisable in French words currently used all over Europe. But by bringing them together in this way and drawing attention to them, they become more fixed in one's mind; again, the dissemination of the international language should encourage and facilitate the study of our own language.

I thus see no greater danger in the success of an artificial international language than in the creation of a universal postal union, or the indefinite expansion of the metric system. Is this success likely? The progress from "philosophical languages" to *a posteriori* languages made up of European roots, from Volapiik to Esperanto, from Esperanto to Ido, and the convergence it shows towards a necessary system, is a strong argument in favour of the initiative. But the main point I wanted to make here is the surprise and interest I felt and which, I believe, will be felt by all who would like to spend a few days studying the remarkable linguistic mechanism that Dr Zamenhof has made so much progress on and that has been simplified or adapted by men such as

Louis Coutuat, Mr Beaufront, Mr Leau, Mr Jespersen etc., without forgetting Mr Abbé Guignon himself. Their works are a valuable contribution to the age-old endeavour to create an artificial language, which is now almost complete.

Sitting of 16 July, 1925.